## U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights



## Dear Colleague Letter Harassment and Bullying (October 26, 2010) Background, Summary, and Fast Facts

## What are the possible effects of student on-student harassment and bullying?

- Lowered academic achievement and aspirations
- Increased anxiety
- Loss of self-esteem and confidence
- Depression and post-traumatic stress
- General deterioration in physical health
- · Self-harm and suicidal thinking
- Feelings of alienation in the school environment, such as fear of other children
- Absenteeism from school

## What does the Dear Colleague letter (DCL) do?

- Clarifies the relationship between bullying and discriminatory harassment under the civil
  rights laws enforced by the Department of Education's (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR).
- Explains how student misconduct that falls under an anti-bullying policy also may trigger responsibilities under one or more of the anti-discrimination statutes enforced by OCR.
- Reminds schools that failure to recognize discriminatory harassment when addressing student
  misconduct may lead to inadequate or inappropriate responses that fail to remedy violations
  of students' civil rights. Colleges and universities have the same obligations under the antidiscrimination statutes as elementary and secondary schools.
- Discusses racial and national origin harassment, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, and disability harassment and illustrates how a school should respond in each case.